

He hath, and is again to cope your wife" (4.1.84-86). According to the *OED*, the verb "cope" had several senses in Shakespeare's day, and four of them resonate in this speech. Certainly "encounter with," the gloss the Riverside edition provides, is accurate. But Shakespeare touches on three other meanings, too: to engage, as in a military action; to buy or barter for; and most subtle of all, to cut or pare the beak or talons of a falcon. Othello is a military man. Iago's speech has the incisive cadence and cogency of a scout's report to a commander. Indeed Iago acts as a perfidious scout, literature's first counterintelligence agent, as he promulgates chaos through disinformation throughout the play. This role implies the military sense of *cope*, "to engage": By this time Othello perceives Desdemona and Cassio as the enemy and has decided to dispatch her, and Iago volunteers (4.1.211-212) to be Cassio's "undertaker." Concerning the mercantile senses, one of Cassio's responses to Iago's promptings in this misleading interview fortuitously bears them out: "I marry [her]! What, a customer!" (119; "her" is the Riverside edition's interpolation). To the Moor, this callous deprecation of Bianca seems directed at Desdemona, and establishes the ground of Othello's imminent accusation that Desdemona is a whore.

But the fourth, and choicest, nuance concerns falconry. By paring a falcon's beak or trimming its talons, a falconer would render the bird unable to kill. If Othello "coped" Desdemona in a timely and caring fashion, he would pull her back in; it would amount to an act of forgiveness and grace and offer a time during which the relationship could be restored. Iago's task has been to prevent any such salving meeting from occurring, and especially to prevent Othello and Desdemona from consummating their marriage; this keeps the edge on Othello's fury. So it is that Iago says Cassio is doing the coping; this means that Cassio has controlled Othello's wild huntress. The image vibrates with sexual and emotional overtones. Desdemona, Iago implies, has become totally dependent on her keeper, or Cassio, since she now lacks the raptor's means of feeding. Coincidentally, that would make her the equal of Bianca, whom Othello calls Cassio's "whore" (177). Othello's earlier fear seems to be ironically false: Instead of Desdemona becoming "haggard," it looks as though his presumed rival has mewed her.

I believe this reading allows a genuine insight into Shakespeare's imagination. It is impossible to prove that he chose "cope" to echo the imagery from act 3, but it is easy to admire the effects of its presence. For one thing, noting so subtle a reemergence of the image several scenes after its introduction deepens our participation in Shakespeare's shaping of the play. Whether consciously or subconsciously, Shakespeare selected the most telling word. Furthermore, we see that imagery itself is as powerful a vehicle for theme and tone, as is characterization per se. Since Iago did not hear Othello's "If I do prove her haggard" speech in act 3, he cannot be deliberately playing on those

words here in act 4. He so often does so that this exception emphasizes Shakespeare's uncanny ability to exploit every moment dramatically. Only he divined the finishing touch that Iago's use of "cope" would put on the earlier speech. Of course, Othello himself might flinch to hear his metaphor meet Iago's word, but he does not continue the word play and so fails to register the wound verbally. Instead, in a perfect display of tragic irony and of the importance of imagery in a drama, Shakespeare has the pain enacted. The stricken general finally copes his falcon/wife himself on their wedding sheets, which remain unstained with blood until he spills his own.

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Shakespeare's THE RAPE OF LUCRECE

"Mine enemy was strong, my poor self weak,
And far the weaker with so strong a fear.
My bloody judge forbod my tongue to speak;
No rightful plea might plead for justice there.
His scarlet lust came evidence to swear 1650
That my poor beauty had purloined his eyes;
And when the judge is robbed, the prisoner dies."¹

These lines are spoken by Lucrece when she explains to her husband Collatine and "his consorted lords" (line 1609), how Tarquin has raped her. The state of Lucrece's feelings at this point in the poem is not altogether easy to determine. In reply to Collatine's sensitive question as to what has happened to her ("What uncouth ill event / Hath thee befall'n, that thou dolt trembling stand?" 1598-99), Lucrece's reaction at first seems strangely ambiguous:

"Few words," quoth she, "shall fit the trespass best,
Where no excuse can give the fault emending." (1613-14)

One's conventional reaction may be to think that "the fault" is Tarquin's. But if that is so, why does Lucrece think that she should speak few words about it? And, given that she does not specify whose fault she is referring to, does she see it as her own? There is at present a tendency in some criticism to argue that the answer is yes—that Lucrece is one of many women in sixteenth- and seventeenth century literature who, as Deborah G. Burks puts it in a recent essay, "have internalized this sense of their own culpability for men's assaults on them." To Burks, lines 1650-51 of the stanza indicate that Lucrece "blames her beauty for Tarquin's action," and she comments:

The legal imagery of this line [presumably, "And when the judge is robbed, the prisoner dies"] underscores the gender shift in the perception of rape. Lucrece is the guilty defendant, Tarquin the injured accuser. Her beauty is a thief, a ravisher. His lust stands as irrefutable truth. It is telling that in addition to being framed here as the injured party, Tarquin is also acknowledged to be the judge. He has the power of execution over Lucrece, a power these lines insist is just. Lucrece not only finds herself guilty as charged, but further condemns herself for having demonstrated poor judgement in choosing so powerful a man as her victim.²

To my mind, Burks's reading of these last three lines is wrong. If read as belonging to the stanza as a whole, they form part of a statement in which Lucrece unequivocally and clearheadedly accuses her attacker. To begin with, she refers to him as her "enemy"—a fact left out of account in Burks's concentration on lines 1650-52. Tarquin is not acknowledged simply to be her judge but, as line 1648 makes clear, is seen as a "bloody judge." Roe correctly glosses "bloody" as "bloodthirsty," and there is thus no possibility that the judge in line 1652 (who is the same person) is considered—by either Lucrece or Shakespeare—to be someone whose power is in any way "just." Likewise, there is no question of either Lucrece or Shakespeare regarding this man as (in Burks's words) "her victim." The victim, of course, is the prisoner who is judged, that is, Lucrece herself.

How does the judge come to be robbed? To Burks, there is no doubt that Lucrece blames her own beauty for a miscarriage of justice (one in which, oddly, it is not Lucrece herself who is the victim, but the rapist). Indeed, as Burks has it, Tarquin's "lust stands as irrefutable truth." But that is not what the passage says at all. There are, in fact, *two* parties who might have appeared before the judge, Tarquin. One, who is allowed to give evidence, is Tarquin's own "scarlet lust." This can hardly be equated with Burks's "irrefutable truth," because, as Roe explains, scarlet is traditionally the color of reprehensible passion, and it is also that of a judge's robes. In other words, Tarquin's lust is reprehensible, but it parades under the guise of being a judge, thus usurping the role of true judgment. Tarquin and his lust should be separate but have in effect become one, so that the objective judge that Tarquin might have been is "robbed" of his power to judge his prisoner, Lucrece, fairly. As we have already been informed in line 1648, this judge is bloodthirsty. Given his lack of objectivity, he denies a plea to the party who would have provided an alternative view to that of his lust, namely, Lucrece herself: He "forbode my tongue to speak; / No rightful plea might plead for justice there" (1648-49).

Rape is seen to be a repugnant crime by both Lucrece and Shakespeare. There is not a hint in this stanza—which occurs at a crucial moment in the poem—that Lucrece considers her own beauty as blameworthy. She does not in any sense accuse herself of a crime of which, as we can fully judge for ourselves, she is in no sense guilty. She does feel, as she says in the next stanza,

that she has been defiled, but she is explicit regarding the innocence and purity of her mind:

"Though my gross blood be stained with this abuse, 1655
Immaculate and spotless is my mind;
That was not forced, that never was inclined
To accessory yieldings, but still pure
Doth in her poisoned closet yet endure."

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NOTES

1. "The Rape of Lucrece," *The Poems*, ed. John Roe, New Cambridge Shakespeare (Cambridge, England: Cambridge UP, 1992).
2. Deborah G. Burks, "'I'll want my will else': *The Changeling* and Women's Complicity with Their Rapists," *ELH* 62.4 (1995): 770. As Burks points out (n 35), Coppélia Cahn has extensively discussed in two essays, what she takes to be Lucrece's complicity: "The Rape in Shakespeare's *Lucrece*," *Shakespeare Studies*, ed. J. Leeds Barroll III, Barry Gaines, and Ann Jennalie Cook (New York: Franklin, 1976) and "Lucrece: The Sexual Politics of Subjectivity," *Rape and Representation*, ed. Lynn Higgins and Brenda Silver (New York: Columbia UP, 1992).

Shakespeare's SONNET 73

That time of year thou mayst in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.
In me thou see'st the twilight of such day
As after sunset fadeth in the west,
Which by and by black night doth take away,
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.
In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie, As
the death-bed whereon it must expire, Consum'd
with that which it was nourish'd by.

This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,
To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

The production, in summer 1996, of William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* by the Indiana Repertory Theatre made a number of interesting adaptations of the drama for a modern audience. Some of the less-significant changes were the